United Nations Security Resolution 1325: A Recipe for Gender Stereotyping in Humanitarian Logistics

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Abstract

Purpose
United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) Women, Peace and Security, is generally regarded as the most important commitment to date made by the global community to incorporate a gender perspective in the maintenance of peace and security. One of the Security Council aims is to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in United Nations (UN) field based humanitarian logistics operations. This paper critically evaluates UNSCR 1325 and its related documents and policies in order to expose the assumptions made by the UN regarding gender, peace and security in humanitarian logistics operations.

Research approach
This paper utilises a case based approach as the appropriate research methodology. Focus groups utilising semi structured interviews and questionnaires were used for data collecting. An interview guide was used which allowed the researcher to channel the focus groups questions without being unduly tied to the question format. The participants were segmented into three focus groups ensuring that the participants in each group had something to say about the topic as well as feeling comfortable saying it to each other. This homogeneity allowed for more free-flowing conversations among participants within groups and also allowed analysis that examined differences in perspectives between groups.

Findings and Originality
UNSCR 1325 introduces the notion that females are considered suitable for humanitarian logistics and CIMIC type roles, precisely because they are female. UNSCR 1325 almost entirely focuses on women; women as different from men, both in terms of the particular vulnerabilities they face in situations of armed conflict and in terms of their potential contribution to peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. It espouses an essentialist approach to gender.

Research impact
Within humanitarian logistics a gendered view of the different types of skills and knowledge that contribute to logistics competence is in its infancy. This paper explores the assumptions made in respect of female personnel and examines whether these assumptions might in fact lead to the positioning of females into gender stereotypical roles.

Practical impact
There are obvious implications for militaries and particularly for female members of various militaries in terms of compliance with UNSCR 1325. Without recognising the potential for gender stereotyping implicit in the resolution, militaries might inadvertently create an unequal working environment, which may have implications for the retention of military personnel.

Keywords: Humanitarian Logistics, Gender, Logistics Skills, Military.
Introduction

The most obvious differences between those who work for the military and NGOs involves gender and generation. NGO field workers are typically far younger than the officers with whom they will have to interact and a high proportion of them are female (Slim, 1997). An example of the differences (gender and age) between the NGOs and the military arose in Rwanda (Durnin, 2007). NGOs field workers are typically far younger than the officers with whom they interact and a high proportion is female. This poses a challenge to co-operation as a colleague who worked in Rwanda, angrily pointed out after a less than fruitful visit to a British Field Hospital: “If I can credit his experience and take him seriously, why can’t he give me the same credit” (Durnin, 2007). This Aid worker had previously worked in Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Angola. In any organisation where promotion is achieved through a mixture of ability and service, it is easy to believe that “wisdom comes with age”. Where that organisation is predominantly of one gender, there exists the danger of young members of the opposite sex being taken less seriously. This represents a level of organisational immaturity, which must be addressed within the military if inter-agency co-operation is to succeed.

Unfortunately most discussions about gender very often become a discussion only about ‘women’. The perception is that ‘gender issues’ refer to women only and is exacerbated by the fact that most people working in the area of gender are women. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy endorsed by the United Nations (UN) to achieve gender equality and refers to:

The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. (UN, 1997:2)

It is important to note from this definition that gender mainstreaming does not focus solely on women but, women usually are the targets and beneficiaries of mainstreaming due to what is considered to be their disadvantaged positions in many societies (Valenius, 2007). According to Angela King, the then Assistant UN Secretary General and Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the implication is that the consistent inclusion of women’s views and experiences in all policies would inevitably lead to changes in their content and priorities, “making them better tailored to the realities of our times, and to the needs of all members of society” (King, 2001:vii).

The term gender balance refers to the equal representation of women and men at all levels of employment. Although gender balance is directly related to and supports gender equality, simply increasing the numbers of women (or men) does not ensure that there is equality because changes in organisational structures, procedures and cultures may be required to create organisational environments which are conductive to the promotion of gender equality.

Overview of UNSCR 1325

Resolution 1325 calls upon the Security Council, the UN Secretary General, UN member states and all other parties to take action in four inter-related areas:

1. Participation of women in decision making process. There are two parts to this theme: The first is to increase the number of women in international institutions and field operations and the second relates to consulting and including women’s groups in actual peace processes and humanitarian missions.
2. Gender perspective and training in peacekeeping. Member states should be provided with training guidelines and material on the protection, rights and needs of women, and the importance of involving women in peacekeeping missions.
3. The protection of women. All actors in negotiations, peace processes and humanitarian missions should adopt a gender perspective that includes measures to protect and respect the human rights of women.
4. Gender mainstreaming in UN reporting systems and implementation mechanisms. The Security Council put the primary responsibility for the implementation of the resolution on the Secretary General who reports to the Council on the development of gender mainstreaming in this field.
The adoption of UN Resolution 1325 on 31 October 2000 was the culmination of a growing commitment to gender equality within the UN. The journey began with the foundation of the UN in 1945. However, in the first decades of the UN, the term ‘woman’ was the main focus of attention rather than gender when issues of equality were discussed. In October 2000 a coalition of women form five peace organisation, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, International Alert, Amnesty International, Women’s Commission for Women Refugees and Girls, and the Hague Appeal for Peace, joined with the UN Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM) to draft a resolution that called for the protection of women and girls during armed conflicts, for gender sensitivity in all UN missions, including humanitarian, and for women to participate equally at all negotiations. Consequently, at the fifth UN conference for women held in New York in October 2000, UNSCR 1325 was adopted (Pietilä, 2007).

Discourses Surrounding Females in Complex Emergencies

Military missions in complex emergencies typically fall into five general categories; providing humanitarian assistance, protecting humanitarian assistance, assisting refugees and displaced persons, enforcing a peace agreement, and restoring order (Byman et al, 2000). The specific tasks necessary to carry out the missions vary widely, going far beyond standard military duties. It is also common for the mission to expand or shrink in its scope or focus with little warning. Complex emergencies pose a variety of constraints on and problems for military operations that decrease overall effectiveness (Rietjens et al, 2007). The military may also have to balance political and humanitarian objectives.

Women are seen as providing ‘unique contributions’ to humanitarian processes and gender is understood in terms of women’s differences (Whitworth, 2004). A study carried out in 1995 by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) highlights ways in which women can make a difference in peace operations. The study claims that when a critical mass of women is present on humanitarian missions they make a unique contribution. They are successful at diffusing violence, are perceived to be compassionate and are willing to listen (Whitworth, 2004). When recommending that more female military personnel be sent on UN peacekeeping missions, the UN assumes that all female military personnel posses the same special qualities and can make a unique contribution to the mission. The results of ‘adding women and stirring’ are mainly cosmetic and sometimes even counter productive – it essentialises and totalises gender and women’s experiences, as if biological womanhood were enough to define experiences. Consequently, differences between women’s political goals on economic, social, regional and ethnic factors are missed (Valenius, 2007).

The literature surrounding female military personnel and use of force again exposes essentialist approaches to gender. The gender stereotypical perspective of peaceful, nurturing women, common to almost all cultures, has traditionally limited the participation of women in the military and in combat (Olsson et al, 2001). There is however, increasing evidence and recognition that women are actively involved in fighting during conflict. Although female participation varies widely in military organisations authorised to use force, such as in regular armies, and in non-state actors, such as in irregular armies, they tend to represent between 10 percent and one third of both these types of forces (Bouta et al, 2005: 9).

From a military perspective, the UN is promoting the employment of females in gender stereotypical roles, ones in which they may use their perceived uniqueness to best advantage. The same gender stereotypes which previously acted as a barrier to female participation in some aspects of war are now actually increasing the potential for women in the military of today albeit in stereotypical roles (DeGroot, 2001).

If contributing countries comply with UNSCR 1325 requirements, because of limited numbers, female personnel may be withdrawn from other humanitarian roles into those where they have more direct contact with the host country civilian population, for example for the military in the growing area of Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC). For those females restricted to support roles this may increase their opportunity for service with the UN, not for those who are not restricted, this would channel them into roles which are restrictive and gender stereotyped. As part of their National Action Plan on Resolution 1325, the Dutch Ministry of Defence aims to increase the numbers of females in their armed forces from nine percent to twelve percent by 2012. They see females playing an important role in an environment where CIMIC and a nuanced diplomatic approach have become more essential than large scale use of force (Policy Dept DSI/SB, 2007).
Gender in Humanitarian Logistics

Organisations have called for a ‘gendered’ response in humanitarian aid (ALNAP, 2005) and even designed gendered orientated action plans (FAO, 2001). To date there has been limited research in the role that humanitarian logistics can play in mitigating gender disadvantages in disasters (Kovacs and Tatham, 2008). The logistician’s awareness of gender-related problems, and their ability to overcome the practical consequences, has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of an aid programme. Thus, the need to consider issues of gender applies not only in aid programmes but also within humanitarian supply chain (Kovacs and Tatham, 2008).

When it comes to gender studies, Calás and Smirich (2006) list sex segregation of occupations, gender mainstreaming (acknowledging that global economic conditions do not affect wo/men equally), work/family conflicts as the three most actual topics. Even though all three topics can indeed be found in logistics literature, the focus has insofar been mostly on the issue of sex segregation of occupations, in particular on the lack of female logisticians. Aid organisations combining elements of social work and health care typically have a largely female workforce; yet even in organisations with over 90% females, the logisticians are typically male (e.g. Médecins Sans Frontières) (Kovacs and Tatham, 2008).

The topic of “gender mainstreaming” is a recent trend in gender studies (Broadbridge and Hearn, 2008; Calás and Smirich, 2006). In humanitarian logistics, the focus is thus not only on gendered disadvantage(s) of aid recipients and of gender justice, but also on setting a political agenda to promote gender equality (FAO, 2001; Fonjong, 2001; SEAGA, 2002). Humanitarian organisations have begun to take a differentiated view on female beneficiaries, taking the cultural specificities of their socialisation into account (OCHA, 2006; Oxfam, 2005). At the same time, the societal implications of disasters, and disaster relief, have also been examined including a gender lens (Rodrigues et al., 2005).

Methodology

This study takes a case-based approach. According to Yin (2003) is appropriate under certain conditions, compared to other forms of research (e.g., experiments, surveys, archival analysis, and histories). The appropriate conditions are (1) that the research questions are "how," "why," or certain types of "what" questions, (2) the researcher has no control over behavioural events, and (3) the focus of the research is on contemporary events.

Data Collection

The decision was made to select only female members of a ‘middle power’ military as research participants. This decision was in view of UNSCR 1325 acutely impacting on female members of militaries more than their male counter parts. The participants were segmented into three groups ensuring that the participants in each group had something to say about the topic as well as feeling comfortable saying it to each other. This homogeneity allowed for more free-flowing conversations among participants within groups and also allowed analysis that examined differences in perspectives between groups. The aim was homogeneity in background and not homogeneity in attitudes because if all the participants shared virtually identical perspectives on the topic, it would have led to flat unproductive discussions (Morgan, 1997). Table 1 provides a summary of the relevant details of the focus group composition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Service Years</th>
<th>Overseas Service</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FG1</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>2/Lt</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maura</td>
<td>2/Lt</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>2/Lt</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noelle</td>
<td>2/Lt</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG2</td>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Capt</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>2 Tours</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Capt</td>
<td>17 years</td>
<td>1 Tour</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FG3</td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Cpl</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>3 Tours</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Pte</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Pte</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>1 Tour</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>Sgt</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>4 Tour</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Cpl</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>1 Tour</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly all analysis of focus groups concentrates on the “... manifest content of group discussions. In contrast there has been little attention to the micro-dynamics of the interaction process in focus groups” (Morgan, 1997: 63). Eye contact, pauses in interaction, use of words and patterns of speech used by the participants in the focus group were observed. Although transcripts of the focus groups discussions were essential in "the discovery of regularities" (Robson, 2002: 457) and coding of themes, the focus group audio files allowed for the identification of emphasis or lack of emphasis being placed on particular issues by the participants. These and other similar non verbal observations were added, virtually, to the content to create a more comprehensive package for analysis.

Findings
At the outset a grid based on the main questions posed throughout each focus group discussion was constructed (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you special qualities which could be used in peacekeeping?</th>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
<th>Focus Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Would you feel stereotyped if posted to a CIMIC type appointment?</th>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
<th>Focus Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, but would be happier to take on a CIMIC role if their male colleagues were similarly posted.</td>
<td>Yes, but would be happy to take on CIMIC role if their male colleagues were similarly posted.</td>
<td>Yes, but would be happy to take on a CIMIC role at this point in their careers.</td>
<td>Yes, but would be happy to take on a CIMIC role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think that posting to CIMIC type appointments would have an adverse effect on your career advancement?</th>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
<th>Focus Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Focus Group Findings Summary

Women as Different or Bearing Special Qualities
When asked whether they thought they, as women, possessed ‘special qualities’ which would assist them in peacekeeping operations, each focus group responded in the negative. Each was of the individual view that individuals had their own qualities and some men and some women may have the qualities which would make them suitable for CIMIC work. While each focus group disagreed with the view that all women possessed special qualities that made them suitable for peacekeeping, there was general agreement by the participants that others, particularly those inhabitants of a host country, especially women, might view women as more approachable, less threatening and more understanding.

All the focus group participants viewed people as individuals with individual skills, talents and personalities. They do not concur with the essentialist views of women espoused in UNSCR 1325 and its related documents. However, the participants did agree that, because of gender specific roles ascribed to women in potential host countries, this misconception could be ‘used’ to military advantage but that appropriate training would be required in order to be more effective.

Training
The participants were very much aware of the requirement for training in order to be able to perform their job competently and therefore be considered valid and equal members of the team. The competitive and occasionally negative environment had the effect of making the female cadets and recruits try even harder to prove themselves worthy members of their respective training classes. The importance of completing a CIMIC course or CIMIC training, prior to deployment in a CIMIC role, was
identified by all focus groups. Martha (FG2) said, “I would assume, at least I would expect that you would be prepared with a CIMIC course”. For the research participants, their ‘femaleness’ alone did not qualify them for CIMIC type roles in overseas missions. Having completed a CIMIC course would do so. Although UNSCR 1325 does require member states to provide training guidelines and material on the protection, rights and needs of women, and the importance of involving women in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, it nonetheless assumes that female military personnel are automatically qualified to provide ‘unique contributions’ to peace processes (Whitworth, 2004). This is at variance with the views held by all the participants in the research.

Perception of CIMIC Role
None of the participants had been posted to CIMIC operations although some with overseas service were involved in the periphery of ad-hoc humanitarian operations carried out by their overseas unit in the host countries.

FG 1 perceived CIMIC work positively. They recognised that CIMIC work could be more difficult compared to other military roles. “In the long run it could be more difficult because you are dealing with emotional issues …and these things can play on your mind long after you are finished your work” (Jenny, FG 1). Although the members of FG 2 believed that posting females into CIMIC roles would involve gender stereotyping, each had a different perspective. FG 3 was of the view that if females were to be selected for CIMIC appointments because of their gender, there would be some empirical evidence to prove that females did a better job, otherwise “it would just boil down to stereotyping” (Grace, FG 3). All focus groups believed that if females were chosen for CIMIC appointments simply because they were female, this would amount to gender stereotyping.

Implications for Careers
As newly commissioned officers, Focus Group 1 had not considered their future career path at all. With no overseas experience, their perception was that they would just do the best they could at whatever job they were posted into. They could not gauge how a CIMIC role would be perceived but there was a fear that a posting to a CIMIC appointment would be viewed as a ‘cushy number’. FG1 believed that if they were continuously placed in a CIMIC role this might compromise their chances of promotion. This fear of the unknown expressed by FG1 had resonance with the underlying fear expressed by the participants of the other focus groups. FG 2 felt that being posted to a CIMIC job would have a negative effect on their career. In the case of Martha, she felt that CIMIC work would have had nothing to do with her professional qualifications and the assumption would be that she had been judged as not being good enough for her specialised role. Joan agreed, especially if someone had held more than one CIMIC appointment. This would compromise her opportunity to experience the ‘breath of appointments’ necessary for promotion, unlike her male peers. The perceived value of the appointment might be diminished if females held it predominantly.

Depending on their skill sets, enlisted personnel (focus group 3) would seek advancement in, for example, administrative, logistic, instructor or weapons streams. For FG 3 completing any overseas mission, including CIMIC work, would in fact enhance their opportunities for promotion and retention in service. For this reason FG 3 felt that a good overseas report in a CIMIC role was a valid as any overseas report, even if they might have been selected entirely because of their gender.

Conclusion

United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) Women, Peace and Security, is regarded as the most important commitment to date made by the global community to incorporate a gender perspective in the maintenance of peace and security. For the first time the Security Council formally recognised the different impacts of armed conflict on women and men and expressed its concern that women and children represented the vast majority of these who are adversely affected by conflict. The resolution seeks to expand the role and contribution of women in UN filed based operations. UNSCR 1325 introduces the notion that females are considered suitable for CIMIC type roles, precisely because they are female. It introduces an essentialist approach which the focus groups participants consider to be subjective. The participants believe that each person has their own characteristics and qualities. They rely on the assessment of their skills as an objective method of assessing their suitability for an appointment. This is perceived as fair.
UNSCR 1325 almost entirely focuses on women; women as different from men, both in terms of the particular vulnerabilities they face in situations of armed conflict and in terms of their potential contribution to peacekeeping efforts. It espouses an essentialist approach to gender. There are obvious implications for militaries and particularly for female members of the armies in terms of compliance with UNSCR 1325. Without recognising the potential for gender stereotyping implicit in the resolution, militaries might inadvertently create an unequal working environment, which may have implications for the retention of military personnel.

It is obvious that a cultural chasm exists between the military and NGOs. At the extreme end of the spectrum in each case, indications suggest that the compromise required for a partnership is not forthcoming. Encouragement is found in the middle ground, where rigidity has given way to pragmatism allowing an uneasy alliance to emerge in some complex emergencies. The dynamics of warfare and international politics have changed so much in the past decade that such situations may become increasingly commonplace. The changing nature of these military deployments and the inevitable presence of civilian agencies as a part of UN-mandated missions, has brought militaries increasingly into contact with the civilian aid community. There is a necessity to maximise a level of mutual understanding so that a working relationship can be realised.

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